

Friday 12th July 2019

Statement to Michael Atkin

The following statement can be attributed to Community Lifestyle Support:

For the past nine months, CLS has worked closely with Sharon and Michael Camac following a devastating incident involving their son Eden while in our care. We are grateful for their decision to work through this incident with us to ensure that we can provide Eden with the best care possible.

On the night of October 9 2018, Eden Camac was seriously injured. This incident was completely avoidable. The worker looking after Eden did not use the available measures to ensure his care. The worker did not properly follow the training they had received, inexcusably leaving Eden in serious pain without seeking assistance or medical attention.

At 7.32am on October 10, one of our workers identified that Eden was in pain, and raised concerns with our on-call service who advised them to seek urgent medical attention. Sharon Camac was immediately informed. In an attempt to understand the cause of Eden's pain, our support worker contacted the worker on shift the previous evening. It was then that the worker disclosed that he had left the bedrail down and Eden had fallen to the floor between 9 and 9.30pm the previous evening. He had failed to seek medical attention or to document or report the incident to the oncoming worker or our on-call service.

Within two hours of our initial detection of the incident, our CEO was notified and he requested an immediate investigation. Within five hours of the detection of the incident, the worker was stood down. Within 24 hours of the investigation commencing, we were sufficiently concerned about the conduct of the worker that we referred the matter to Queensland Police. We also reported the incident to Workplace Health and Safety Queensland.

Our internal investigation included consultation with external stakeholders, a review of training records, additional interviewing of the worker and a determination that the safety mechanisms on Eden's bed were working appropriately. After reviewing this information, we determined that the worker had failed to follow established protocols and uphold their duty of care to Eden. Given the seriousness of our findings, we decided to terminate the worker's employment and notified the State Government of our decision via Blue Card Services.

We remain frustrated that we are unable to definitively state how Eden was injured, and that the only people who know the full details are the staff member on duty at the time and Eden Camac.

At the time of writing, we are yet to formally close our investigation as we are awaiting written advice from Queensland Police and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland as to the conclusion of their independent investigations. As soon as we receive this advice, we will formally close our investigation and will provide a copy of this final report to Sharon and Michael. We continue to liaise with the family and relevant stakeholders regarding this matter.

Our investigation confirmed that we missed one step in the reporting process. Having transitioned from the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to the NDIS, yet without the National Quality and Safeguarding framework active in Queensland, we did not advise nor forward a copy of our critical incident report (as provided to the Police) to the relevant Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services email inbox. We regret this omission. Our focus was firmly on the care of Eden, Sharon and Michael, his support workers, and ensuring that we were engaged fully and transparently with Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and the Queensland Police.

The worker was employed on the basis of his possession of a Certificate IV in Disability, prior experience in the sector (including in high-care settings) and completion of a number of pre-employment assessments. Upon his employment with CLS, the worker completed an additional 12 hours of online and face-to-face induction training covering a range of relevant competencies, including training regarding protection from harm, abuse and neglect. Prior to working on his own within Eden's home, the worker had completed a total of 47 hours of shadow shift training to orientate him to CLS's high-care settings; 16 hours of these being directly in Eden's home. During this time, he was observed to be competent in manual handling and support techniques required to meet the needs of the people he was supporting (including Eden). On September 9 2018, he successfully completed a competency assessment under the supervision of an experienced manager and was then approved to commence working independently.

We took reasonable steps to ensure that the worker had the necessary skills to safely complete the work allocated to him. We acknowledge that his actions were unacceptable, and that as a CLS employee his actions are ultimately our responsibility.

Sharon and Michael's tireless efforts and unflinching advocacy during Eden's time in hospital and in transitioning back to his daily life have been impactful and inspiring. We have been humbled by their decision to include us in this journey as Eden's service provider. At the family's request, we facilitated the installation of video monitoring in Eden's room so that they can monitor Eden's wellbeing at all times. We continue to do what we can to work with them, Eden's Support Coordinator and allied health supports to assist the NDIS in understanding Eden's needs and ensuring that his supports enable him to recover and thrive.

We take seriously any incident that occurs while someone is in our care. Such incidents are rare. However, our job is not done: this year we have undertaken an internal audit at Eden's home that has involved consultation with Sharon and Michael, our support staff and health professionals involved in Eden's care, as well as representatives of the Community Visitor Program. One key outcome of this process has been the decision to recruit a dedicated Registered Nurse who will enable effective communication between CLS and various health

professionals involved in the care of our clients. This position will strengthen our organisation's ongoing advocacy for the fundamental rights of people with disability to receive effective and timely medical services – services that people without disabilities take for granted.

We have determined that, in the future, we will share information with the Queensland Government (Blue Card Services) above and beyond what they require if we dismiss a person due to suspicion of harm, abuse or neglect regardless of the outcome of police investigations.

For the 28 years that CLS has provided support in the Bundaberg region, we have been driven by a series of values which we strive to uphold in all aspects of our work. We have over 200 staff providing over 290,000 hours of services each year to people across accommodation, community and allied health services: we are so grateful for their dedication and commitment and to the countless families who allow us to be a part of their lives. We know that when one of our colleagues acts outside of our values, it affects each and every one of us.

Such events and the way we respond to them informs our culture. While we cannot erase the harm and distress caused, we can commit to its impact never being lost, nor forgotten.

We wholeheartedly support Sharon and Michael's decision to tell their story publicly and will continue to support their determined efforts to strengthen the safeguards available for people with disabilities and their families. We welcome the Royal Commission into the disability services sector as an opportunity for discussion and insight so that our community can improve the outcomes and safeguards for people receiving disability services.

We are deeply sorry that it happened, and we are sorry for the harm and distress it has caused so many people, not the least being Eden. We are privileged to support Eden and admire his courage and determination in recovering from his injuries. We thank Sharon, Michael and Eden for continuing to allow us to be part of their lives.